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THE SUCCESS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS IN THE CITY COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK.

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THE SUCCESS OF JUNIOR COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS AT NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE WAS COMPARED TO THAT OF OTHER TRANSFER STUDENTS, STUDENTS FROM THE SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES, AND CITY COLLEGE "NATIVE" STUDENTS. THE COMPARISON INDICATED THAT JUNIOR COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS (1) TAKE LONGER TO GRADUATE THAN NATIVES, (2) ARE, AS A GROUP, AS SUCCESSFUL AS STUDENTS IN THE THREE OTHER GROUPS WHEN SUCCESS IS DEFINED AS GRADUATION OR CONTINUED ATTENDANCE AFTER 3 YEARS WITH AN ACADEMIC AVERAGE OF "C" OR BETTER, AND (3) ARE AS SUCCESSFUL AS NATIVES, AND APPARENTLY OFTEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN OTHER GROUPS IN EVERY DEGREE AREA EXCEPT ENGINEERING. IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES WERE DISCUSSED. (AD)

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The Success of Community College Transfer Students in The City College of The City University of New York

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the success of community college transfer students at City College, compared with other transfer students, students from the School of General Studies, and City College natives, indicated that: 1) community college transfers take more time to graduate than natives; 2) community college transfers as a group are as successful as students in the three other groups when success is defined as graduation or continued attendance after three years with an academic average of "C" or better; and 3) community college transfers are as successful as natives, and apparently often more successful than other groups in every degree area except engineering, where they are less successful than the other groups. Implications for further studies are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....page 2
2. Background.....page 2
3. Procedures.....page 5
   - Source Groups.....page 5
   - Degree Objectives.....page 9
   - Status Groups.....page 11
4. Results.....page 12
5. Summary and Conclusions.....page 17
6. Implications for Further Study.....page 18
7. Appendices.....page 20

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the transfer programs of the community colleges of The City University of New York is to prepare students to enter the junior year of a four-year college or university and successfully complete the work required for the baccalaureate degree. Most (but not all) of the students who enter the community college transfer programs do so because their high school academic average is too low to permit their acceptance into a four-year college of the University. It is the unique responsibility of the community colleges to accept students whose high school records presumably indicate comparatively lower academic potential, and through programs which include individualized academic and personal counselling, and developmental and remedial courses, prepare them to enter the junior year of an institution for which they had not been adequately prepared two years before.

The purpose of this study was to collect and analyze data which may be helpful in determining how well the community colleges of the City University are performing this function.

BACKGROUND

There is a growing body of research concerning the success of students who transfer from two- to four-year colleges. After surveying the research conducted between 1923 and 1956, Bird[1] reported

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1. Bird, Grace V., "Preparation for Advanced Study", in The Public Junior College, The Fifty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, Chicago 1956.

four general conclusions which had emerged over that 33 year period.

> 1. Junior college transfers make records approximately the same as those made by transfers from four-year colleges and by native students.... They usually show a drop in their grade average in the first term after transfer but then recover that loss.
>
> 2. Junior college transfers retain the relative scholastic standing after transfer that they held before transfer....
>
> 3. There is clear evidence that junior colleges are salvaging a large number of students for success in advanced studies who would otherwise have missed them entirely.
>
> 4. There is variation, sometimes wide, in the findings in different senior institutions and also between junior colleges in the same institution .... By and large, however, the performance of junior college transfers in senior colleges has proven to be so satisfactory that doubts about the quality of junior college preparation for advanced study no longer exist.

Bird's conclusions are in general supported by the findings of two comprehensive studies recently conducted by Knoell and Medsker[2], which were based upon an analysis of the records of over 7,000 junior college transfer students from ten states.

Although the success of junior college transfer students in earning the baccalaureate has in general been confirmed[3], those studies whose samples have included students who enter large numbers of different

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2. Knoell, Dorothy M. and Leland L. Medsker, Factors Affecting Performance of Transfer Students from Two- to Four-Year Colleges, University of California, Berkeley, 1964, and Knoell, Dorothy M. and Leland L. Medsker, Articulation Between Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges, University of California, Berkeley, 1964.

3. In reviewing the past research, however, Knoell and Medsker note that "attrition in the upper division tends to be higher for junior college transfer students than for native students who have persisted to the junior year". Unfortunately, their studies did not attempt to test this hypothesis.

four-year institutions report wide variations in the rate of success of community college transfers. Because of these variations, each four-year college which wishes to determine the success of its transfer students must do so through an analysis of their performance, rather than by relying on 'normative' data collected in other institutions.

To date, no comprehensive study has been made of the success of community college transfer students in the four-year colleges of the City University.[4] Studies made between June 1960 and July 1963 by the Registrar's Office of the City College of The City University of New York[5] have indicated that community college transfer students may drop an average of half a letter grade during their first semester at City College in comparison with their community college averages. Since, however, this drop in grades during the first semester after transfer has been found in almost every community college transfer student study, the City College "slippage" data do not offer insight into the eventual success of these students at the college.

The purpose of the present study was to determine how successful community college transfer students were in the upper division of City College when compared with students in three other groups; those

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4. A longitudinal study of the success of students transferring from Bronx Community College to the City College is currently being planned by the Department of Institutional Research and Studies, Bronx Community College.

5. "Admissions from Community Colleges to the Day Session for the Year Ending June 1963", The City College - Uptown Center, Day Session - Registrar's Office, July 1963.

who had taken all their undergraduate work as matriculated students in the four-year college; those who had transferred to City College from colleges other than City University community colleges; and those who had matriculated from the School of General Studies of City College.

The study was conceived as a pilot project which would consider certain factors related to success without analyzing all the variables which have been found in the past to be of importance in studying the college performance of transfer students. Thus, for example, no analysis was made of the possibility of differences in performance which may have been sex-related, of possible discrepancies between the community college and four-year college grades of transfer students, or of the relative success of transfer students from different community colleges.

Although data in this study may have implications for articulation between the two- and four-year colleges of the City University, readers should be cautious in attempting to make generalizations applicable to all two and four-year colleges from data drawn essentially from only four units of the University.

PROCEDURES

The group of students examined in this study were selected from among those who were considered by City College, Uptown Center to be first-semester Juniors as of registration, Fall 1962.

Source

All registration cards for such students were examined and sorted into four Source categories, based upon the enrollment of the student during the preceding semester, as follows:

1. Native students, who had been second-semester sophomores at City College during the preceding spring semester, and who had never attended another institution of higher education.

2. Community College Transfer students, who had been registered at a community college of The City University of New York during the preceding spring semester. (Note that students transferring from a community college with less than Junior standing were not included in this group.) The colleges of origin of students in this category who were included in this study are shown in Table I.

TABLE I

Community College Transfer Students Entering City College as Juniors, Fall 1962

College	Number	Percent of Total
Bronx Community College	72	67%
New York City Community College	1	1
Queensborough Community College	12	11
Staten Island Community College	22	21
TOTAL	107	100%

3. Other Transfer students, who had been registered at a college other than a City University community college during the preceding spring semester. The colleges of origin of students in this category who were included in the study are shown in Table II.

TABLE II

Other Transfer Students Entering City College as Juniors, Fall 1962

College of Origin	Number	Percent of Total
Non-CUNY community college	2	2%
CUNY four-year college	72	86
SUNY four-year college	2	2
Other colleges or universities	8	10
TOTAL	84	100%

4. General Studies students, who had been registered in the School of General Studies at City College during the preceding spring semester.

The sample selected for this study consisted of the following:

1. A 20% random sample of all Native students.
2. All Community College Transfer students.
3. All Other Transfer students.
4. All General Studies students.

The names of all students selected for the sample were supplied to the City College Registrar's Office, and a copy of each student's transcript was requested.[6] The Registrar's Office was able to

6. The assistance of Mr. Peter Prehn, Associate Registrar of City College, in making transcript copies available for this purpose, is gratefully acknowledged.

easily locate 86% of the 484 transcripts requested. No attempt was made to search for the remaining transcripts. It was the belief of the Registrar's Office that the transcripts which were easily locatable did not differ in any significant way from those which were not. There was no significant difference in the percentage of transcripts located for students within each Source group.

The distribution of students finally included in the sample by Source group is shown in Table III.

TABLE III

Distribution of Students by Source Group

Source	Number	Percent of Total
Native	180	43%
Community College Transfer	107	26
Other Transfer	84	20
General Studies	43	10
TOTAL	414	99%

Although it was the original intention of this study to compare the relative success of Community College Transfers with students in the other three Source groups, the small number of General Studies students, and the atypical distribution by degree objective of Other Transfers made meaningful comparisons difficult. For this reason, statistical comparisons of success reported later in this paper were made only between Natives and Community College Transfers. All tables, how-

ever, contain data for all four Source groups, and tentative conciusions comparing Community College Transfers with General Studies students and Other Transfers were drawn where differences between groups appeared to be significant.

Degree Objective

Students were divided into five groups based upon their degree objective as of their last semester of registration at City College, as follows:

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), with majors in language and literature, art, music, and social studies.

Bachelor of Science (B.S.) with majors in biology, chemistry, geology, physics and mathematics.

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)

Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.)

Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.)

A summary of the distribution of students in the sample by their degree objective is shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV

Distribution of Students by Degree Objective

Degree Objective	Number	Percent of Total
B.A.	142	34%
B.S.	90	22
B.Ed.	37	9
B.E.	140	33
B.B.A.	5	1
TOTAL	414	99%

There were differences in the distribution of students by degree objective within the four Source groups, as is shown in Table V.

TABLE V

Distribution of Students by Degree Objective and Source

Source	Degree Objective										TOTAL
	B.A.		B.S.		B.Ed.		B.E.		B.B.A.		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Native	69	38%	56	31%	15	8%	37	21%	3	2%	180
Community College Transfer	46	43	18	17	14	13	27	25	2	2	107
Other Transfer	8	10	6	7	1	1	69	82	--	--	84
General Studies	19	44	10	23	7	16	7	16	--	--	43
TOTAL	142	34%	90	22%	37	9%	140	33%	5	1%	414

While Community College Transfers enrolled in B.A. and B.E. programs in approximately the same proportion as Natives, they tended to choose B.Ed. curriculums more often, and B.S. curriculums less often than did students in the Native group. The majority of Other Transfers (82%) were enrolled in B.E. programs, reflecting the transfer of students from the other senior colleges of the City University into the only four-year engineering program offered in the University system. In contrast, only 16% of the General Studies group were in B.E. programs, while almost half were enrolled in B.A. curriculums.

Status

Students in the sample were divided into four Status groups according to the following criteria based upon an analysis of their transcripts subsequent to the completion of the 1965 summer session at City College:

1. Graduated; receipt of a baccalaureate degree indicated on the transcript.

2. Withdrawn; no registration subsequent to the 1964-65 fall semester, and a cumulative grade-point average of "C" or better.

3. Failure; a cumulative grade-point average of under "C" after the last semester of registration.

4. Attending; last attendance during the 1964-65 spring semester or 1965 summer session; grade-point average of "C" or better; and no indication of withdrawal on the transcript.

It should be noted that these classifications were created to facilitate the analysis of data, and may not reflect the student's actual status with City College at the end of the 1965 summer session. For example, a student classified here as "attending" may actually have graduated, with receipt of the degree being noted after his transcript copy was made, or a student classified as "failure" may in fact have been eligible to continue his attendance on probation.

The distribution of students by Status at the end of the 1965 summer session (three years after their initial registration as Juniors) is shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI

Distribution of Students by Status at the End of the 1965 Summer Session

Status	Number	Percent of Total
Graduated	314	76%
Withdrawn	14	3
Failure	37	9
Attending	49	12
TOTAL	414	100%

As shown in this table, at the end of three years the greatest majority of students (76%) had been graduated. Twelve percent had presumably left the college, either due to withdrawal or failure, and the remaining 12% were still enrolled and eligible to continue work towards the degree.

RESULTS

The data collected for this study were examined to provide tentative answers to the following questions:

1. How successful are Community College Transfer students as a group, compared with students in the other three Source groups?

2. Is a student's degree objective related to his chances for success, and if so, how successful are Community

College Transfer students in each degree area compared with students in the other three Source groups?

Before these questions could be studied, it was necessary to define "success". Two possible definitions were considered.[7]

First, success could be defined as graduation within three years after achieving Junior status. The proportion of students in each group meeting this criterion could then be compared to determine which group was most successful. A preliminary analysis of the data indicated that this definition of success would result in a bias favoring Native students, since students in the other three Source groups took longer than Natives to graduate.[8]

Second, success could be defined as either graduation within three years after becoming a Junior, or continued attendance into a fourth year with an average of "C" or better. This definition of success would obviate differences in graduation rates which may have

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7. Studies of community college transfer students have often utilized comparisons of their grades before and after transfer as indicators of relative success. This criterion was not considered for this study because it does not indicate relative graduation or attrition rates of students in the various groups.

8. For example, 78.4% of all Natives who graduated three years after achieving Junior status did so within four semesters (or five in the case of B.E. students), while only 67.5% of Community College Transfer graduates received their degrees in four semesters. While the average Native graduate required 4.30 semesters to earn the degree after achieving Junior status, the average Community College Transfer graduate required 4.89 semesters.

occurred solely because of the greater length of time required by non-Natives to earn the degree, but would run the risk of defining some students as successful who may never earn their baccalaureate degree.

For the purpose of this study, it was decided to adopt the second alternative, and consider success to be defined as either graduation or as continued attendance with an average of "C" or better. This decision was based on the significant differences in the time required by Natives to earn the degree compared with other groups, and on data which indicated that a substantial number of City University students who do not complete degree requirements within three years after achieving Junior status do, in fact, eventually graduate.[9]

The distribution of students in the four Source groups, considered in terms of success as defined above, is shown in Table VII.[10]

TABLE VII

Success of Students by Source Groups

Source	Total Number	Percent of Total
Native	180	93%
Community College Transfer	107	86
Other Transfer	84	86
General Studies	43	74
TOTAL	414	88%

9. A reanalysis of data in Max, Pearl, "College Dropouts - A Broader Base for Inquiry", Board of Higher Education, November 1964 (mimeo), indicates that of City University students graduating within seven years of their admission as freshmen, 6.3% completed their requirements more than three years after entering their Junior year.

10. The distribution of students in the four Source groups by Status after three years is shown in Chart A in the appendix for informational purposes.

Analysis of the data in Table VII indicated that the percentage of successful students in the Native and Community College Transfer groups were not significantly different.[11] On the basis of these data, it appears that Community College Transfer students are as successful as Native, Other Transfer, and General Studies students after achieving Junior status at City College.

It has already been noted that there were differences in the distribution of students by degree objective within each Source group (Table V). Is success related to a student's degree objective? The rate of success of students in the four Source groups are shown within each degree objective area in Table VIII.[12]

TABLE VIII

Distribution of Successful Students by Source Within Degree Areas

Source	Percent Successful by Degree Objective			
	B.A.	B.S.	B.Ed	B.E.
Native	94%	91%	94%	92%
Community College Transfer	91	88	100	67
Other Transfer	88	50	*	89
General Studies	63	70	86	100

* Sample less than five

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11. χ^2 =2.79, not significant at the .05 level of confidence. As stated above, only Native and Community College Transfer data have been compared statistically in this study. The term 'significant' is used here, and in the following sections of this study, only in its statistical sense.

12. The complete distribution of students by degree objective, Source, and status is shown in Chart B in the appendix for informational purposes.

Analysis of the data from which Table VIII was abstracted revealed the following.

There was no significant difference in the rates of success of Native and Community College Transfer students in B.A. programs.[13] Students in the General Studies group apparently were less successful than other groups in this degree area.

There was no significant difference in the rates of success of Native and Community College Transfer groups in B.S. programs.[14] Both Other Transfers and General Studies groups appeared to be less successful than the Native and Community College Transfer groups in this degree area.

There was no apparent difference in the rates of success of any of the Source groups in B.Ed. programs.[15]

There was a significant difference in the rates of success of Native and Community College Transfer groups in the B.E. area.[16] Community College Transfers were not as successful as Native students in this degree area. Both Other Transfers and General Studies groups appeared to be as successful as Natives in B.E. programs.

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13. χ^2 = .36, not significant at the .05 level of confidence.
14. χ^2 = .08, not significant at the .05 level of confidence.
15. Chi-square not calculated because of distribution of sample.
16. χ^2 = 6.52, significant at the .02 level of confidence.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the data, the following generalizations concerning community college transfer students at the City College appear to be warranted.

1. Community college transfer students take longer to complete baccalaureate degree requirements at the City College than do native students.

2. Community college transfer students as a group are as successful as native students at City College, when success is considered to be graduation or continued attendance with an average of "C" or better three years after achieving Junior status.

3. When success rates are viewed within the various degree areas, community college transfers are as successful as native students at City College in B.A., B.S., and B.Ed. programs, but are not as successful as City College natives in B.E. programs.

The community college transfer programs appear to effectively screen and prepare potential baccalaureate candidates who were unable to gain admission to the four-year college as freshmen. Even in the engineering programs, where community college transfers were not as successful as natives, it may be educationally significant that a large number of students who were not admissible to an engineering program after high school graduation were prepared to do satisfactory upperclass work in competition with students presumed, on the basis of their past academic achievement, to possess higher native ability. For this reason, it may be argued that even when the success rates of the two groups are

not equivalent, the community college performs the important function of salvaging a substantial number of students who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to work towards a bachelors' degree in institutions of excellence. This argument, must, of course, be analyzed in terms of social and educational policy, rather than by the statistical techniques utilized in this study.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Comparisons of student status, such as those made in this study, offer only one way of examining the performance of community college transfer students. Further study is necessary if a more comprehensive understanding of community college transfer students is to be achieved. Studies yielding answers to the following questions would be of great value in reaching such an understanding.

- Are the patterns of student performance reported in this study similar to those of students on other units of City University?
- Do these patterns vary from year to year, or are they relatively stable?
- What proportion of students defined here as 'attending' will actually graduate?
- Is success after transfer to a four-year college related to community college grades?
- Are present transfer admission standards for community college students appropriate?

- What changes occur in the grades of community college students after transfer, and how are these changes related to their probability of graduation?

- Are any differences in transfer performances sex-related?

- How successful are community college transfers in business programs and other curriculums not offered at City College, Uptown Center?

- Why do transfer students take longer to graduate than natives?

- How successful are community college students who transfer before receiving the associate degree?

- Why are community college students less successful in engineering than other students?

- Do students at the lower end of the four-year college admissions spectrum have a greater probability of receiving a baccalaureate degree by attending a senior college, or by attending a community college and transferring?

With few exceptions, the data needed to help provide answers to these and related questions are currently available in the files of administrative offices in City University.

APPENDIX A

The Distribution of Students by Source and Status Three Years After Becoming Juniors

Source	Status								
	Graduated		Withdrawn		Failure		Attending		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Native	154	86%	5	3%	8	4%	13	7%	180
Community College Transfer	77	72	1	1	14	13	15	14	107
Other Transfer	61	73	2	2	10	12	11	13	84
General Studies	22	51	6	14	5	12	10	23	43
Total	314	76%	14	3%	37	9%	49	12%	414

APPENDIX B*

The Distribution of Students by Degree Objective, Source, and Status Three Years After Becoming Juniors

* Does not include B.B.A. candidates

B.A. CANDIDATES

Source	Status: Graduated N	Graduated %	Withdrawn N	Withdrawn %	Failure N	Failure %	Attending N	Attending %	Total N
Native	62	90%	2	3%	2	3%	3	4%	69
Community College Transfer	38	83	--	--	4	8.5	4	8.5	46
Other Transfer	7	88	--	--	1	12	--	--	8
General Studies	11	58	4	21	3	16	1	5	19
Total	118	83%	6	4%	10	7%	8	6%	142

B.S. CANDIDATES

Source	Status: Graduated N	Graduated %	Withdrawn N	Withdrawn %	Failure N	Failure %	Attending N	Attending %	Total N
Native	48	86%	2	4%	3	5%	3	5%	56
Community College Transfer	13	72	1	6	1	6	3	16	18
Other Transfer	3	50	1	17	2	33	--	--	6
General Studies	4	40	2	20	1	10	3	30	10
Total	68	75%	6	7%	7	8%	9	10%	90

B.Ed. CANDIDATES

Source	Status								Total
	Graduated		Withdrawn		Failure		Attending		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Native	13	87%	1	7%	--	--	1	7%	15
Community College Transfer	14	100	--	--	--	--	--	--	14
Other Transfer	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	100	1
General Studies	6	86	--	--	1	14	--	--	37
Total	33	89%	1	3%	1	3%	2	6%	37

B.E. CANDIDATES

Source	Status								Total
	Graduated		Withdrawn		Failure		Attending		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Native	29	78%	--	--	3	8%	5	14%	37
Community College Transfer	12	45	--	--	9	33	6	22	27
Other Transfer	51	74	1	1	7	10	10	15	69
General Studies	1	14	--	--	--	--	6	86	7
Total	93	60%	1	7%	19	14%	27	19%	140